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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

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Notice of Availability of the Northwest Colorado Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, (NEPA) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, (FLPMA) the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared the Northwest Colorado Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation for the Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Region, and by this notice is announcing its availability and the opening of a protest period concerning the Proposed RMP Amendment.

DATES: The BLM planning regulations state that any person who meets the conditions as described in the regulations may protest the BLM's proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS. A person who meets the conditions outlined in 43 CFR 1610.5-2 and wishes to file a protest must do so within 30 days of the date that the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. A protest regarding the Proposed RMP Amendment announced with this notice must be filed by [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: The Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS is available on the BLM ePlanning project website at <https://go.usa.gov/xP6Xa>. Click the Documents and Report link on the left side of the screen to find the electronic version of these materials. Hard copies of the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS are also available for public inspection at the Colorado State Office and the Grand Junction Field Office.

All protests must be in writing (43 CFR 1610.5-2(a)(1)) and filed with the BLM Director, either as a hard copy or electronically via the BLM's ePlanning project website listed previously. To submit a protest electronically, go to the ePlanning project website and follow the protest instructions highlighted at the top of the home page. If submitting a protest in hard copy, it must be mailed to one of the following addresses:

U.S. Postal Service Mail: BLM Director (210), Attention: Protest Coordinator, WO-210, P.O Box 71383, Washington, D.C. 20024-1383

Overnight Delivery: BLM Director (210), Attention: Protest Coordinator, WO-210, 20 M Street SE, Room 2134LM, Washington, D.C. 20003

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bridget Clayton, Sage-Grouse Coordinator, BLM Colorado, telephone (970) 244-3045; address 2815 H Road, Grand Junction, CO 81506; email bclayton@blm.gov. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Relay Service (FRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact Ms. Clayton. The FRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with Ms. Clayton. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The BLM prepared the Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS to enhance cooperation with States by improving alignment with State management plans and strategies for Greater Sage-Grouse, while continuing to conserve, enhance, and restore Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat.

The BLM developed the proposed land use plan amendment in collaboration with Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, State wildlife managers, and other concerned organizations and individuals, largely through the Western Governors Association's Sage-Grouse Task Force. Using its discretion and authority under the FLPMA, the BLM proposes amending land use plans that address Greater Sage-Grouse management to improve alignment with State of Colorado plans and management strategies, in accordance with the BLM's multiple use and sustained yield mission.

This Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS is one of six separate planning efforts that are being undertaken in response to the Secretary's Order (SO) 3353 (*Greater Sage-grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States*) and in accordance with SO 3349 (*American Energy Independence*). The proposed plans refine the previous management plan adopted in 2015 and aims to strike a regulatory balance and build greater trust among neighboring interests in Western communities. The Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS proposes to amend the RMPs for field offices on BLM-administered lands within Colorado. The current management decisions for resources are described in the following RMPs:

- Colorado River Valley RMP (BLM 2015)
- Grand Junction RMP (BLM 2015)

- Kremmling RMP (BLM 2015)
- Little Snake RMP (BLM 2011)
- White River RMP (BLM 1997) and associated amendments,
including the White River Oil and Gas Amendment (BLM 2015)

The Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS planning area is part of the larger Rocky Mountain Region and encompasses approximately 15 million acres, including 8.5 million acres of public lands managed by five BLM field offices in the 10 northwest Colorado counties of Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Larimer, Mesa, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt, and Summit. The planning area encompasses National Park Service, US Department of Defense, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Colorado, county, city, and private lands. Decisions in this RMP Amendment apply solely to BLM-administered surface (totaling approximately 1.7 million acres) and BLM-administered Federal mineral estate (approximately 2.1 million acres) within Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.

The formal public scoping process for the RMP Amendment/EIS began on October 11, 2017, with publication of a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register (82 FR 47248) and ended on December 1, 2017. BLM Colorado held a public scoping meeting in Craig, Colorado on November 8, 2017.

The Notice of Availability for the Draft Supplemental EIS was published on October 11, 2017, and the BLM accepted public comments on the range of alternatives, effects analysis and Draft RMP amendments for 90 days, ending on August 2, 2018. During the public comment period, two public meetings were held in Silt and Craig, Colorado.

The Northwest Colorado Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS focused on the issue of allowing greater flexibility for the BLM to work with the State of Colorado on issues related to fluid minerals management and mitigation. The Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS evaluated two alternatives in detail, including the No Action Alternative (Alternative A) and one action alternative (Alternative B). Comments on the Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS received from the public and internal BLM review were considered and incorporated as appropriate into the proposed plan amendment.

Alternative A would retain the current management goals, objectives, and direction specified in the current RMPs, as amended, for each field office. Alternative B was identified as the BLM's Preferred Alternative. Identification of this alternative, however, does not represent final agency direction. The Proposed RMP Amendment is a refinement of the Management Alignment Alternative from the Draft RMP Amendment and Draft EIS, with consideration given to public comments, corrections, and rewording for clarification of purpose and intent.

Instructions for filing a protest with the Director of the BLM regarding the Proposed RMP Amendment and Final EIS may be found online at

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/public-participation/filing-a-plan-protest> and at 43 CFR 1610.5-2. All protests must be in writing and mailed to the appropriate address, as set forth in the ADDRESSES section above or submitted electronically through the BLM ePlanning project website as described above. Protests submitted electronically by any means other than the ePlanning project website protest section will be invalid unless a protest is also submitted in hard copy.

Protests submitted by fax will also be invalid unless also submitted either through ePlanning project website protest section or in hard copy.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your protest, please be aware that your entire protest, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time.

While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

AUTHORITY: 40 CFR 1506.6, 40 CFR 1506.10, 43 CFR 1610.2, 43 CFR 1610.5

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